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When Students Cross the Globe, They Gain New Perspectives on the Law: France, New Zealand and Washington, D.C., Offer Unique Opportunities

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“We met with one of the justices, and it was like meeting Ruth Bader Ginsburg.” – Maggie Wydysh ’15

When students cross the globe, they

France, New Zealand and Washington, D.C., offer unique opportunities

Three SUNY Buffalo Law School courses held outside of Buffalo – two of them outside the United States – took students into uncharted territory during January short courses.

Students traveled to France, to New Zealand and to Washington, D.C., for courses that exposed them to new ways of thinking about the law, and in some cases gave them valuable cross-cultural exposure – crucial given the increasingly globalized nature of law practice. Reflecting on these intensive two-week courses held in January, students say they found the experiences rich in ways that just can’t be found at home.

“The perspective we got on international relations and trade was different than it would be coming from an American,” says third-year student Jeff Hartman, who was part of Associate Professor **Meredith Kolsky Lewis’** class **“New Zealand: International Economic Law in Context,”** based at the Victoria University of Wellington Law School, in New Zealand.

“We got a sense of what international trade law as a profession could be and got a better grasp on those issues. The course gave me a valuable awareness about all the different things you can do in international law,” says Hartman. The comparative law course covered trade, investment, business and intellectual property issues, as well

as points of difference between the New Zealand and U.S. legal systems: New Zealand does not have a written constitution; has a system of parliamentary sovereignty; and has a very different tort law regime from the United States, as well as a unique approach to intellectual property.

Students attended lectures and met with government officials, industry representatives and lawyers in private practice, as well as members of the local Maori community. The group also took excursions to a winery and a wildlife sanctuary.

Hartman’s classmate Maggie Wydysh ’15 was impressed by the low-key attitude of the powerful officials they met. At the New Zealand Supreme Court, for example, “We met with one of the justices, and it was like meeting Ruth Bader Ginsburg. They keep things very informal, because

they want to seem approachable to the public. The justice was so laid-back, she even had summer clothes on.

“We met with some of the most important people in New Zealand. Each area we learned about, it was the top expert in the field. But everyone is so informal and friendly, you wouldn’t have known it.”

Also in January, Professor **Stuart Lazar**, whose focus is in tax law, took a dozen students to Paris, Brussels and Luxembourg for a course titled **“Basics of International Corporate Transactions.”** In Paris the SUNY Buffalo students worked with tax law students associated with the Sorbonne, researching and presenting on assigned topics.

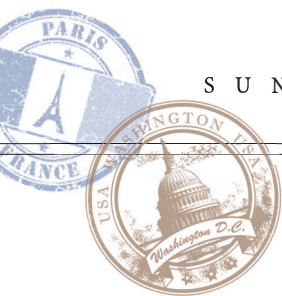
“The most valuable part was getting the chance to work with students



SUNY Buffalo Law students at the New Zealand Supreme Court with Associate Professor Meredith Kolsky Lewis, fourth from left, and Justice Susan Glazebrook, center

At right, the Victoria University of Wellington Law School





gain new perspectives on the law



Associate Professor
Meredith Kolsky
Lewis



Professor Stuart
Lazar



Associate
Professor Tara
Melish



Nicole Lee '02

who are fluent in this area of law,” says student Julia Purdy ’16. “Working on a project with people from another culture and across language differences is a unique challenge. But their English was quite good. There was some give-and-take – the presentations were in English, but they were able to teach us a lot of the tax law.

“I’ve always wanted to study at the

Sorbonne,” Purdy says, “and I’m really glad that we got to do it. I think it’s important for our school to have something like this.”

Third-year student Beatrice Ajaero was impressed by the experience of being at the European Court of Justice, in Luxembourg, and watching arguments in a tax case that was being translated from Romanian into several languages. “Seeing the respect and integrity of the U.K., French and German practitioners all converging in this space, it was a tremendous experience for me,” she says. The visit also shone light on the relationship between European Union law and laws of the constituent EU countries.

Closer to home, Associate Professor **Tara Melish** taught “**Human Rights Lawyering: Advocacy, Influence and Impact in Washington, D.C.**” in conjunction with Nicole Lee ’02, principal at the public policy advocacy firm Lee Bayard Group. The course

brought students face to face with advocates and public officials in an intensive two weeks

in the nation’s capital.

For second-year student Andrew DeMasters, one highlight was a visit to the advocacy organization Human Rights First. “There was an expert there who did litigation regarding Guantanamo Bay,” DeMasters says. “When we asked him what sort of strategies he was using to get the U.S. to finally close down Guantanamo, his explanations were brilliant. He recommended everything from policy reports to tactical litigation. Finally he suggested to work with other organizations to really personalize the message and bring the issue home.”

Third-year student Emily Riordan also was interested in their contacts’ frank discussion of tactics, particularly “going to government agencies, meeting people on other side of the table and hearing from them what is effective and what’s not in terms of advocacy. We talked about building the story and having a particular person who can tell what happened to them, putting a face to the problem. And we talked about putting forth smaller, more realistic goals to work toward. It definitely reaffirmed my commitment to this work.”

Third-year student Candace Morrison, who hopes to work as a human rights lawyer after graduation, says the experience provided an important avenue for making contacts in Washington. “The exposure was invaluable,” Morrison says. “Being there, seeing the pace of it, being in D.C. – that tactile, out-of-the-classroom experience really makes such a difference. It came at a perfect time, as I’m looking toward my career, and I loved every minute of it.”



The New
Zealand
Supreme
Court



Students in Washington, D.C.,
with Associate Professor Tara
Melish and Adjunct Instructor
Nicole Lee '02.